

via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

April, 2010

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Seeing Christ in Everyone, or What I've Learned from Norm



by Dan Hughes

"And as our perceptions are quickened, and as we pray that our faith be increased, we will see Christ in each other, and we will not lose faith in those around us, no matter how stumbling their progress is. It is easier to have faith that God will support each House of Hospitality and Farming Commune and supply our needs in the way of food and money to pay bills, than it is to keep a strong, hearty, living faith in each individual around us--to see Christ in him."

—Dorothy Day 1940

I first saw Norman Searah at a Des Moines Catholic Worker mass. I wasn't sure what to make of Norm as I looked at him sitting in the corner of the room. There he was, as scruffy as can be, dressed in old coveralls and tee-shirt, sporting a large unkempt beard, his cane leaning beside his chair. He was sitting expressionless and seemed to be watching everyone. When it came time to introduce himself he said he was a Des Moines Catholic Worker, welcomed everyone in a halting voice, said something about his gratitude for Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin and Pete Seeger, and he was done. What is a guy who was slightly familiar with the Catholic Worker Movement to think about this guy?

My family and I have lived in the same house with Norman for more than a year now. He has been a Catholic Worker for decades. Others may feel they would deserve special treatment or status because of longevity, and so might I, but it does not seem

to be like that for Norman because instead of doing the things that Catholic Workers might do, it is simply and clearly what he is. I see Christ in that. He does his work and doesn't require fanfare. He takes care of the storeroom and keeps donations in order so he can give them to the guests who need them. He pulls weeds out of the sidewalks, he continually thinks of ways of making things better for people, mostly poor people, people in need. He brings a treat to my girls because he just thinks they would like it. He tells the receptionist at the hospital emergency room, while being treated for a severely broken foot, that he really likes her hair, and she smiles because she knows he is sincere. It makes her day a little better. Sometimes in this crazy world, a blessing comes along, one's perceptions are quickened, and seeing Christ in someone becomes very easy. That is how I have been blessed with Norm. Let me try to explain lessons I have learned.

Norm has told me he has a small learning disability, but I am convinced he knows things most people never do. I think he sees as Jesus who I see in the scriptures might see. The rest is most likely chaff. There is no noisy gong or clanging symbols, just love, just Norm.

Norman has been through a stroke, he has diabetes, he has had sort of a bad leg I think forever, and he broke his foot last year so severely that he had to get pins put in his foot and wear a halo for several months. He had to rehabilitate in a nursing home facility for two months. Most of us are self-indulgent and feel free to whine over almost everything. I never once have seen him complain or feel sorry for himself. He often says any

situation he is in is an adventure and was pretty interesting. I don't mean pretty interesting in a sarcastic way; I mean he truly means it as if his situation is a good thing. Ask him how he is and will always say, pretty good. In fact, he used his time (cooped up in a nursing home often unable to walk or move) to come up with ideas to be helpful to others. Norman the teacher has taught me not to magnify my perceived problems and to see more clearly the possibilities. I am so impressed.

Norman intentionally sheds earthly goods. He lives in a 15x15-foot room yet he always seems to be giving his stuff away. It's like he (really) knows that God provides what he needs, and his job is just to pass it on. He is a true conduit. The words, "Don't you know God knows the number of hairs on your head? Don't worry about tomorrow" is a reality in his life. Again, he teaches me.

Norman has numerous times given me peace no doubt without even knowing it. I don't know how else to say it. I see so many times in this world backstabbing, maliciousness. Unsubstantiated fears—often due to lies and manipulation—leading to wars, large and small, global and personal, and I grow weary. It is difficult to see Christ in what is going on around me sometimes. Countries are invaded on false premises, and all of the people who are occupied are intentionally and falsely described as terrorists by the media. And, everyone seems to lack critical thinking skills. We are told shields are loaded guns, and people are trashed for another's agenda. I do fear that I might lose the ability, as Dorothy Day wrote, "to keep a strong, hearty, living faith in each individual

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Unless noted (or we goofed), all photos and art are produced by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community.

Cover Photo and Illustration by Greg Schmick**The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community**

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, a shower or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

Becoming a Des Moines Catholic Worker

We are usually open to considering new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our web site.

Mailing Address

PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

Bishop Dingman House (Hospitality Center and Business Phone)

1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-0765
Residents: Ed Bloomer, David Goodner, Tracy Robson

Phil Berrigan House

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781 Residents: Frank Cordaro

Viola Liuzzo House

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-401-4197
Residents: Renee Espeland, Dan Hughes, Frankie Hughes, Reetzi Hughes, Norman Searah, Mona Shaw

Lazarus House

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-326-4832
Residents: Ashley Megan, Sean Megan, Wrigley Megan

Weekly Lectionary Bible Study

Mondays, 7pm. Berrigan House
Call to confirm.

Weekly Mass or Spiritual Renewal Service

Fridays, 7:30pm, Dingman House
All are welcome!

The Chiapas Project

Chiapas, Mexico
Richard Flamer
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.

-Dorothy Day

Bob Zellmer, "Presente!"



Former Des Moines Catholic Worker Community member Robert Wayne Zellmer, age 50, passed away Sunday, March 7, 2010 in Des Moines.

Bob was born on July 17, 1959, in Knoxville to Donald and Sandra (Marshall) Zellmer. He grew up in Pershing and graduated from Twin Cedars High School, class of

1977. He was a carpenter throughout his life. He enjoyed: fishing, hunting, singing and playing his guitar, cooking, and especially enjoyed hunting mushrooms.

Bob was an outdoorsman, and was known as a modern day mountain man. He was a very caring person, and was always available to lend a hand.

Bob is survived by his parents, Donald and Sandra of Bussey; two sisters, Donna Hutchinson of Knoxville, and Cathy (Mark) Reed of Bussey; two brothers, Gary Zellmer, and Roger (Kim) Zellmer both of Bussey, and a host of nieces and nephews.

Bri and Alex Move East



Brianne Boylan and Alex Barnes were interns at the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community from September 2009-March 2010. Both are moving to the Baltimore, MD, area where Bri will study in a nursing program at Johns Hopkins. Alex left us the following note.

Dear Supporters of the Des Moines Catholic Worker,

As I prepare to leave Des Moines, I wanted to thank you for making it easy for me to do good. Your donations to the Des Moines Catholic Worker made it easy for me to contribute to the Worker's drop-in center: serving food, giving out clothing and, especially, getting to know people outside of my social stratum.

Living and volunteering here at the Des Moines Catholic Worker has been a great learning experience for me. I've enjoyed talking with many of the people who come to the Catholic Worker's drop-in center at its Bishop Dingman House on 7th Ave. I talked with them about where they're from, why they moved to Des Moines, or what has changed over the years. I often wondered "if I were in their shoes, would I manage as well?". Certainly I would look for a Catholic Worker House - a place where those who want to give meet those who have a need.

Thank you,

Alex

The brutal winter has left our food pantry bare. Any food donations will be gratefully accepted, especially "protein in a can" items, such as canned meat, tuna, soups, stews, etc. Check the back page for more information.



Five Arrested for Occupying Senators' Offices



by Brian Terrell

On Monday afternoon, February 23, the Des Moines offices of Iowa's Senators Grassley and Harkin were occupied by members of the Peaceable Assembly Campaign, PAC. The PAC is a national campaign seeking an end to the U.S. wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan and an end to U.S. support of the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Each Thursday afternoon since October 29, Iowans participating in the campaign have hand delivered petitions to the Des Moines offices of Senators Grassley and Harkin encouraging them to sponsor and vote for legislation consistent with the campaign's goals that include ending the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, ending military aid to Israel and converting excessive military spending to human needs abroad and in the U.S. As neither senator had responded to these repeated appeals, more than a dozen Iowans visited their offices on Monday to wait for the senators' agreements to join them in ending these illegal and wasteful wars of aggression.

The activists arrived at both offices around three in the afternoon and after introducing themselves to the senators' respective staffs and announcing their intentions, waited silently for answers to their demands. The PAC activists decided that since the senators had been amply informed of their concerns, silence was the better part. For some of the participants, their silence was a Lenten discipline. For all, including the senators' staffs and later the police, a serious and meditative spirit prevailed over the next few hours in the two offices on either end of a corridor in the Des Moines Federal Building.

When the Federal Building was closing in early evening, most of the activists left the building, but some remained, considering that the First Amendment to the Constitution ensures that the right of the people to peaceably assemble for the redress of grievances not be abridged. The Bill of Rights notwithstanding, an inspector with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement police who provide security to federal buildings) cited Kirk Brown for violating a police order when he refused to leave Senator Grassley's office. Chris Gaunt extended her peaceable "assembly of one" for 45 more minutes by staging a "die-in," lying down on

the office floor. Chris' posture provided her with better opportunities for most human interactions with Senator Grassley's state director and with two Homeland Security plainclothesmen sent to figure out what she was doing.

Renee Espeland, Ed Bloomer and Elton Davis were issued the same federal citations as Kirk and Chris and all five were released from custody and expelled from the federal building before 7 PM.

The Peaceable Assembly Campaign will continue in Des Moines and around the nation. Thursday visits to Senator Harkin's and Grassley's offices will continue, and more occupations such as Monday's are being contemplated.

For more information, contact Brian Terrell at 641-785-2321 or terrellcpm@yahoo.com

Photos to the right of the five arrested were taken the day of the action.



Ed Bloomer



Kirk Brown



Renee Espeland



Elton Davis



Chris Gaunt



Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello there! It's winter, it's worse than the one last year. This year or before it, we got a visit from the Alberta Clipper, and all the bad weather. It went from Canada to Florida, maybe beyond, and parts of Texas got snow. I don't know about the other part of the country, I heard that my New England had bad weather. I wonder about other parts of the world; I know that Haiti had an earthquake that was bad to the whole island: people dead, hurt, homeless, mad, sad, and more. Mexico, I heard a part got flooded; California had more mud slides.

I wonder what's next.

I wonder if there will be other bad earthquakes, maybe tornados. I wonder if hurricanes will be bad.

So far we had some fog, ice storms, some snow melt, and two blackouts, or if you will, power outages. Haiti had another earthquake; I wonder if it snowed in Baghdad. I wish the Earth had a Human Voice so we could understand its problems and all the stories it knows. Imagine what it could tell us, even about its brother and sister planets.

But it's got a voice of many from nature, from its growing of food in the fields, to the beauty around us, to its animal life of all kinds. We go down to the sea to see and to be near to watch, play, hear, and feel. We go to the mountains to think, to look around us, to hear from the wind, and other sounds and more.

As someone who grew up in New England, I used to pick berries in the forest next to home, just up the hill. There was a lot of forests, lakes to explore, animals to see. Soon I got to see a lot of

my hometown. I got to see nearby towns, then later, like an animal, I got to other parts of New England. Later I learned that there's more to life, you need to share it, which I owe to my mother and father. From an old school teacher, Mrs. Constance Richson, not too old to express yourself, no matter how old you are. Even if you're lonely and want to hug a tree or pick dandelions. We all learn things from a lot of people: mother, father, teacher, other people.

I'm glad we're people that care. I'm glad that we got soldiers over in Afghanistan, not to fight, but to help the farmers there. I hope no human being is done to them. I think it's good to help others like we're doing in Haiti. If I could speak or write mid-eastern, I would write to end this war and other wars. What do we gain by killing? Who's going to clean up the mess? Or figure out how it started and why? We kill, we

steal, and others things, even if it's not in war. No matter who you are, no matter what the reason.

I just watch the weather. It seems that it's been raining on the west coast; it's heading for the Midwest. I hope the people living in the tunnels under Las Vegas will find someplace to call home for a while. And those living on heat grills in Washington, D.C. I hope you're OK and people in boxes or tents or make-shift huts. I only know about the cities, but I'm sure that there is somewhat poor in town. Most of our cities have a lot of poor, homeless. Not all poor are lazy, even the veterans that are poor and living aren't lazy either. A lot of places won't hire poor people because they don't have an address. Different places have different or ordinances for the poor; sooner or later the way this world is going we might end up like the poor,

homeless fighting over something simple.

We might be like *Mad Max* instead of *Star-Trek*, if you know what I mean.

Thank you for your time. Oh yeah, just watching the weather roll on.



Climbing Jacob's Ladder: Eddie B.



Eddie sits in his room with his close friend and companion Miss Kitty, who Eddie, as often as not, calls "Mom."

by Mona Shaw

"God has put us who bear his Message on stage in a theater where no one wants to buy a ticket."

1 Corinthians 4:9

"Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed that easily."

Dorothy Day

These two quotes conflate like cream in coffee when I consider Eddie. If not the least, Eddie is certainly the lesser of these in a culture of status and regard. He blends in and out of us like daylight—always there, always comforting and warm and usually taken for granted. Still, I know of no one who would deny that Eddie climbs Jacob's ladder with a rare faithfulness and swings his heart first over each rung.

"Eddie's a saint," is said of him often.

There are things many know about Eddie. He's the first one on shift for the day. He washes dishes other community members have soiled, without a word. He fixes the coffee he doesn't drink and brings in the mail. He's the one most apt to answer the phone or meet volunteers at the door to haul in donations—even though he

has three hernias. He often smells of Murphy's Oil Soap because that's what he uses to mop the floors four nights of the week. He visits prisoners in the state penitentiary at least once a month. He writes even more prisoners at least weekly. He buys prisoners books and magazines or mails them money orders to spend in the prison commissary. He regularly visits a number of elderly shut-ins, making sure their walks are shoveled, that they're supplied with food and toiletries, and brings their favorite restaurant take-out that he buys himself.

He's a member of Veterans for Peace, Citizens to Abolish the Death Penalty, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and Animal Rescue Missions. He's a regular at the Tuesday Healthcare Vigil and Thursday Peace Vigil, missing less than a handful of times in many years. He participates in every direct action for social justice to which he can find a ride, and he's the one we most assume will put his body on the line for the cause with its scores of arrests and days in jail.

While those who consistently give 10% of their income to the poor may feel entitled to some piety, Eddie keeps 10% of his monthly

social security check and gives 90% to the poor.

He phones his mother every day.

Eddie's a saint.

There are things few know about Eddie. The eldest of four, Edward Walter Bloomer, III, was born June 15, 1947, in Louisville, Kentucky. His first experience with heartbreak and grief was when he was six, and his three-year-old sister died of cystic fibrosis. A Vietnam-era veteran, he was part of the Heavy Equipment Airborne Combat Unit in the Army. He came from working people and poor people, and his heart ached more than once for the suffering he saw and couldn't stop. He came from people who believed in speaking your mind and always felt he wasn't quite right if he didn't stand up for what was right. He also knew he was lucky compared to some.

He was 19 when he was jay-walking in Louisville against a light when a motorist hit him hard enough to fly into the air. When he landed on the concrete the young man driving the car hovered over his motionless body distraught. The young man was Black. And, because he was Black passers-by made lynching-like threats to the driver. Eddie willed his way through his pain to intervene.

"It's not his fault! It's not his fault! It's mine!" he kept hollering until "they let the poor fellow go."

He was an animated and vivacious young man who explored all of his passions. A voracious reader and a sedulous scholar, he had (and still has) a particular love for the poetry of Allen Ginsburg and plays of Tennessee Williams. He may be an unparalleled jazz aficionado and can recite the label and versions of even the most obscure musicians. He was fascinated with the Beats and all things Beatnik and haunted the clubs of the famous and never-to-be-famous where the music, poetry, thinking and booze flowed freely.

He was a member of the Socialist Workers Party and United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America. He was not only a union man, he was known as the most out-spoken union man for workers in the General Electric factory where he worked after high school. He

was so effective that the company hired a couple of burly men to threaten to kill him if he didn't shut up. One day after it became clear these weren't mere threats, he decided he didn't want to die for an assembly line, and he walked out. He was black-balled across the city and could only find work at pick-up jobs.

Two years later, in 1983, he saw an ad in a leftist periodical that read, "Advocate for the poor wanted. Room and Board. No salary." Within the month he was in Washington, D.C. Bloomer joined Mitch Snyder, Wendy Vasquez (an activist who now also lives in Des Moines), and others in a fast-ing campaign with the now legendary Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) in Washington, D.C. The fast was intended to put pressure on the Reagan Administration during the Vietnam War, questioning justice and human rights.

CCNV wanted the Reagan Administration to free up money to help the poor and homeless in D.C. It had been an understanding that if CCNV staffed the shelter, the federal government would help financially. Two days before the election and the 51st day of the fast, President Reagan announced the demanded funds would be allocated..

Exhausted spiritually, psychologically, and physically from the fast, Eddie followed Wendy Vasquez to Des Moines and spent a year at the Des Moines Catholic Worker before returning to Kentucky.

He stayed in Louisville for five years working with Dare for Care, a second-harvest food bank and Project Warm, a heating assistance program. In 1990 Eddie chose to come back to the DMCW for good.

Eddie's a saint.

Considering himself neither prophet nor teacher is strong evidence that Eddie is both. He leads by his consistent intent to follow. Eddie is not inspired by great acts by famous leaders. Rather he is driven by an aching heart for the suffering he has seen and for whom he seeks relief. He avoids any limelight and is unconcerned about any legacy he may leave, not so much because he is humble, but that he simply doesn't find such things appealing.

In this, I learn from Eddie the honest blessing of suffering and the liability of privilege. Direct experience with suffering and oppression has always been the sturdier foundation for resisting either. Didn't Jesus try to teach us this? Only love endures through trial and disappointment, while a sense of largesse, celebrity or honor fold quickly like sand.

He says that women have been the major influence in his life.

"Anytime I've seen real courage, some woman who's loved me crosses my mind," he frequently remarks.

There is one thing, however, almost no one knows about Eddie.

Eddie is not a saint.

Eddie is a man. He has no more ability to live the life he lives than anyone else. Eddie is not always patient or serene. He has won and lost at love. And, when he tosses out the phrase of a song, it often means he is languishing in the memory of one of those loves. He has buried friends, family, and lovers. His hernias and arthritis give him chronic aches and pains enough that simply being civil is a chore.

Some people get on his nerves on a regular basis. "That cat gave me the blues from Memphis to Mobile."

He is a man tempted to be bitter over life's slights and tragedies. He has realized a dream or two and knows some dreams will never come true. Yet, he still carries some dreams in this chapter of life. Dreams create even deeper yearning when you're older and aware that time is ever shorter to realize them.

Eddie is a man, a man who climbs Jacob's ladder a rung at a time—sinning, confessing, repenting, forgiving, and doing penance while faithfully believing that every woman and man is his sister and brother.

To call Eddie a saint minimizes his faithfulness and renders him less visible on life's stage. To respect Eddie is not to dismiss him as a saint, but to regard him as a whole man who falls but keeps getting up, a brother who at the end of any turmoil or disappointment will still hold your hand while you're doing the same.

Midwest Resistance Retreat 2010

CHICAGO— Catholic Workers and Peaceable Assembly Campaigners from Voices for Creative Nonviolence have been gearing up for the Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat on April 23 - 26, 2010. St. Michael the Archangel Parish is graciously accommodating the Retreat

The theme of the weekend will be "The Cost of War: At Home and Abroad", giving time to learn and reflect on consequences of the ever-increasing U.S. military budget and the wars this budget funds. The gathering will also focus on the impact of occupations and wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

A number of superb speakers is lined up including Chris Hedges, Frida Berrigan, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, and Claire Schaeffer-Duffy. All are looking forward to the challenging thoughts and actions that will surely emerge from their time together with other participants.

Housing will be at the San Miguel social center and consist of floor space. Please be sure to bring a floor mat of some sort for sleeping comfort on an otherwise hard surface. Very limited bed space may be available at Su Casa if you require a bed because of physical limitations. If so, please contact Su Casa to make arrangements. Beds will be assigned on a first-come first-served basis.

No showers are available for the weekend, though there will be full access to the bathrooms at the school. Doors to the San Miguel social center will open for arrivals beginning at 4 p.m. on Friday. A dinner will be served beginning at 6 p.m. We must be completely out of San Miguel School no later than 7 a.m. on Monday morning.

The broad schedule of events is in the box on the right.

Organizers welcome and appreciate financial contributions to assist with the expenses for the retreat. Contributions can be sent to Voices for Creative Nonviolence; 1249 W Argyle St; Chicago, IL 60640.

Registration will help in planning logistics for the weekend, especially housing and food. Please respond by April 18th, if possible, with the approximate number of people, your community/affiliation, your arrival date/

time, contact info, special requests, and also let us know if you do not plan to stay in the social center. Any questions or concerns are also welcome.

The Cost of War: At Home and Abroad



Chris Hedges



Frida Berrigan



Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer



Kathy Kelly



Claire Schaeffer-Duffy



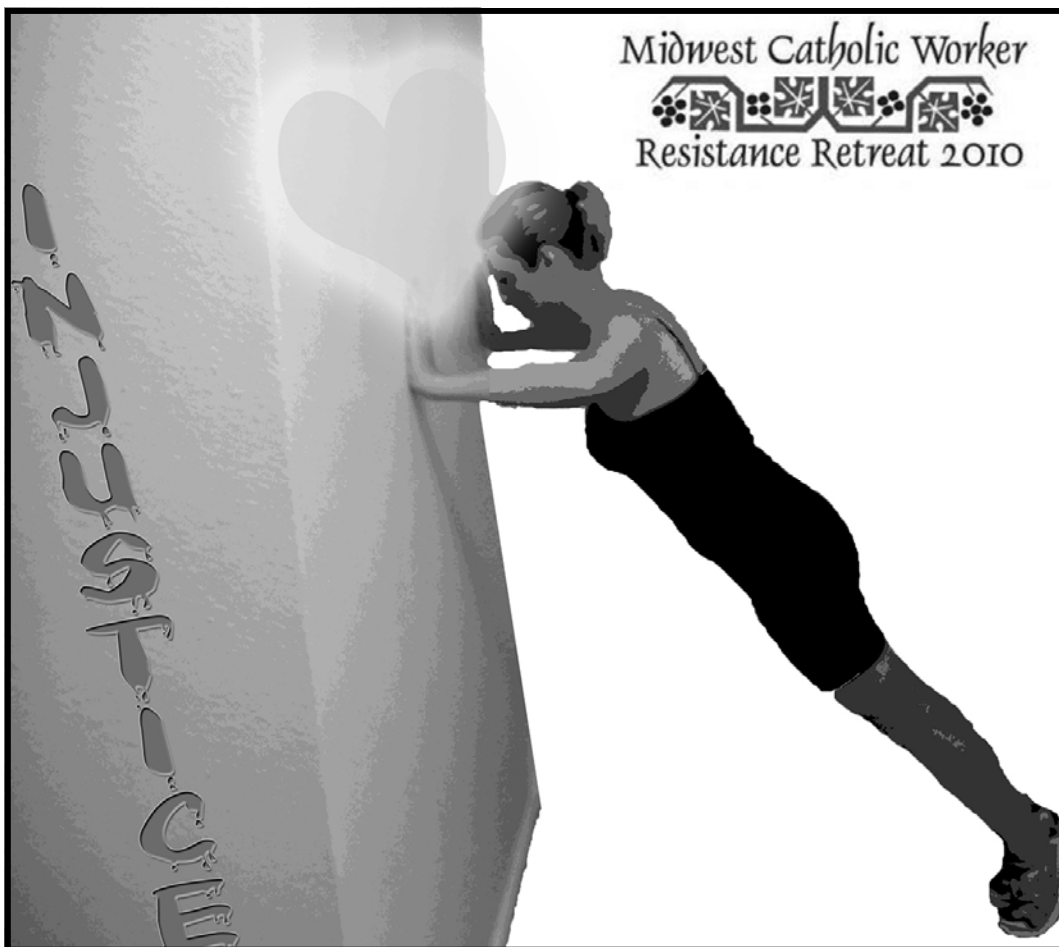
Jeff Leys



Brian Terrell



Beth Preheim



What: Midwest Catholic Workers Resistance Retreat 2010

Who: Anyone wishing a deep experience in non-violence and resisting war.

When: April 23-26, 2010

Where: Social Center at San Miguel, S Winchester Ave & W 48th St (northwest corner of intersection), Chicago, IL.

Cost: Free. A freewill offering will be accepted.

What to bring: Sleeping bag/pad/bed roll. Food to share in community meals. Eating utensils. Musical instruments.

Friday, April 23

Arrive in Chicago with an opening introduction circle in the evening.

Saturday, April 24

Morning: Presentation and Panel Discussion with Frida Berrigan speaking on military spending.

Afternoon: Roundtables and Workshops featuring Catholic Workers and allies in the community.

Evening: Presentation and Panel Discussion with Chris Hedges

Sunday, April 25

Morning: Presentation and Discussion with Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer.

Afternoon: Nonviolence Training and Scenario Development led by Beth Preheim and Brian Terrell.

Evening: Preparation for the Direct Action.

Monday April 26

Morning: Direct Action

Registration for Retreat:

E-mail: sucasacw@gmail.com

Phone: (773) 376-9263

Mail: 5045 S. Laflin St. Chicago, IL 60609

For more info go to:

<http://vcnv.org/resistance-retreat>

The US Coup in Haiti



by Kathy Boylan

"The United States is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world."

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Living up to that bloody description the US Empire has once again destroyed democracy in Haiti. In February as it slaughtered the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. The US staged a coup and kidnapped President Jean Bertrand Aristide who had won 92% of the vote in the 2000 election. For a few weeks before the coup, Amy Goodman alerted Democracy Now listeners to the vicious progression to presidential overthrow. In one especially informative program Amy interviewed Stephen Kinzer: author of *All the Shah's Men*, the first full account of the 1953 US government CIA overthrow of the Mossadegh government of Iran. Kinzer explained that he wrote the book to find out how the coup was planned and orchestrated. What he detailed can best be described as the "blueprint for US coup making. The attacks against Aristide and his eventual overthrow followed the blueprint to a tee.

How did they do it? The straightforward plan began on June 25, 1953, when covert agents began manipulating public opinion to turn as many Iranians as possible against Mossadegh. With CIA agent Kermit Roosevelt in charge, bribes were paid to newspapers to grind out stories portraying the Prime Minister as corrupt, pro communist, hostile to Islam and bent on destroying the morale and readiness of the armed forces. Parliament members, religious leaders, police and military officers received their share of the \$150,000 bribe budget. While the propagandists were doing their work, the coup team hired gangs to create chaos in the streets. In a few weeks Iran was in total upheaval as other armed thugs were hired to attack the first groups. On August 19 Mossadegh fled and then surrendered. He was "tried," jailed for three years, and lived rest of his life under house arrest. I read the book and

tried to counter the coup-makers lies about Aristide who was being described as a corrupt, drug running, human rights abuser.

Unfortunately, some peace and justice folks were fooled by the Empire's propaganda machine. That some good people fell for the lies was, for me, extremely discouraging. *The Washington Post* ran an article condemning Aristide for failing to provide the people of Haiti with clean drinking water. Nowhere did the writer explain that for three years the US had blocked more than \$500 million on international loans to Haiti—intended for humanitarian purposes, like potable water. Ironically, as *The Post* criticized Aristide, front page stories in the same paper exposed the news that the District of Columbia's drinking water was seriously lead contaminated. The Environmental Protection Agency and the water company officials had failed to inform the public for years!

True to the blueprint - news from Haiti reported the brutality of gangs of Haitian thugs carrying US M16's and wearing US uniforms rampaging through Haitian towns killing Aristide supporters. I began to organize an emergency delegation to offer Aristide the support of nonviolent peacemakers. I was to leave for Haiti with Ramsey Clark on February 29, but the trip was canceled when he was hit by a car and seriously injured the day before. The coup occurred on the 29th, and I felt horrified at the US and very guilty that I had not been able to gather a witnessing community.

A few days later, I called a hospice in Port au Prince to

(Continued on page 11)

Haiti was hit long before the earthquake.

Barn Rule: You Break It; You Own It.



by Bill Quigley

The US has worked to break Haiti for over 200 years. We owe Haiti. Not charity. We owe Haiti as a matter of justice. Reparations. And not the \$100 million promised by President Obama either -- that is Powerball money. The US owes Haiti Billions—with a big B.

The US has worked for centuries to break Haiti. The US has used Haiti like a plantation. The US helped bleed the country economically since it freed itself, repeatedly invaded the country militarily, supported dictators who abused the people, used the country as a dumping ground for our own economic advantage, ruined their roads and agriculture, and toppled popularly elected officials. The US has even used Haiti like the old plantation owner and slipped over there repeatedly for sexual recreation.

Here is the briefest history of some of the major US efforts to break Haiti.

In 1804, when Haiti achieved its freedom from France in the world's first successful slave revolution, the United States refused to recognize the country. The US continued to refuse recognition to Haiti for 60 more years. Why? Because the US continued to enslave millions of its own citizens and feared recognizing Haiti would encourage slave revolution in the US.

After the 1804 revolution, Haiti was the subject of a crippling economic embargo by France and the US. US sanctions lasted until

1863. France ultimately used its military power to force Haiti to pay reparations for the slaves who were freed. The reparations were 150 million francs. (France sold the entire Louisiana territory to the US for 80 million francs!)

Haiti was forced to borrow money from banks in France and the US to pay repara-

tions to France. A major loan from the US to pay off the French was finally paid off in 1947. The current value of the money Haiti was forced to pay to French and US banks? Over \$20 billion.

The US occupied and ruled Haiti by force from 1915 to 1934. President Woodrow Wilson sent troops to invade in 1915. Revolts by Haitians were put down by US military, killing over 2,000 in one skirmish alone. For the next nineteen years, the US controlled customs in Haiti, collected taxes, and ran many governmental institutions. How many billions were siphoned off by the US during these 19 years?

From 1957 to 1986 Haiti was forced to live under US backed dictators "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier. The US supported these dictators economically and militarily because they did what the US wanted and were politically "anti-communist"—now translatable as against human rights for their people. Duvalier stole millions from Haiti and ran up hundreds of millions in debt that Haiti still owes. Ten thousand Haitians lost their lives. Estimates say that Haiti owes \$1.3 billion in external debt and that 40% of that debt was run up by the US-backed Duvaliers.

Thirty years ago Haiti imported no rice; today, Haiti imports nearly all its rice. Though Haiti was the sugar growing capital of the Caribbean, it now imports sugar as well. Why? The US and the US dominated world financial institutions—the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank—forced Haiti to open its markets to the world. Then the US dumped millions of tons of US-subsidized rice and sugar into Haiti, undercutting their farmers and ruining Haitian agriculture. By ruining Haitian agriculture, the US has forced Haiti into becoming the third largest world market for US rice. Good for US farmers, bad for Haiti.

In 2002, the US stopped hundreds of millions of dollars in loans to Haiti which were to be used for, among other public projects like education, roads. These are the same roads which relief teams are having so much trouble navigating now!

In 2004, the US again destroyed democracy in Haiti when they supported the coup against Haiti's elected President Aristide.

(Continued on page 11)

Haiti



Lent: A Moral Imperative to Fail



by Renee Espeland

I am so tired! I am preparing my heart and mind and spirit for a visit to my Senators' offices to once again request that two privileged U.S. citizens, tasked with the service of representing me, vote to cease and desist war funding which allocates hundreds of billions of dollars a year to fund a great corporate machine of butchery. The only motivation that I have left in me is the moral imperative to fail. Ironically, this was part of the motivational speech that was presented by Jeff and Josh from Voices for Creative Non-Violence at an event last month that fleshed-out the Peaceable Assembly Campaign (PAC).

It is lent. Again, the only motivation that I have left in me is the moral imperative to fail that is presented in the life of Jesus by the Gospel writers' versions of "The Way."

Love as a choice, forgiveness as choice-making—as opposed to, but not exclusive from, being a feeling or even feeling good—is the gospel's

The same mistake that the disciples keep making (that of refusing to believe things could possibly get any worse) is the mistake that I keep making.

imperative to fail and further evinced given that the cross is the equivalent of modern day lethal injection or the electric chair, and crucifixion was a legal construct of the Roman Empire for those found guilty of a capital offense. It is failure.

Regardless of either an interpretation of the Gospel as unconditional love, unlimited forgiveness, radical egalitarianism and a call to view the world from that of the disenfranchised; or non-violent living as non-cooperation with injustice, active resistance to oppression, do no harm and shedding class privilege; life in our communities of Christians committed to non-

violence can be godless warfare. When bearing false witness both perpetrator and casualty are destined to fail. Connivance, lethargy and prey become indictments to the cross—we literally are "all in this together," and literally I say "OH MY GOD...!"

The same mistake that the disciples keep making (that of refusing to believe things could possibly get any worse) is the mistake that I keep making. Jesus response continues to be Jubilee: there is a moral imperative to fail. The call to the cross is no laughing matter...not one thing about it is to be taken lightly...that cross is heavy and by the time it is time to haul it through town and up a hill, a girl will already be tired!

This burden is too great for me. So the days that I surrender—it feels like surrendering to evil—and lay this at the foot of the cross that Jesus showed me how to carry, are indeed the days that go the best. As bad as it is, when I lay this at the foot of the cross of the mothers in Pakistan, who no longer have their children alive because of the bombing of unmanned aerial vehicles (aka unmanned drones owned and armed by the U.S.), I gain

WE'VE GOT SOME OVER-RIPE TOMATOES HERE - WOULD YOU LIKE US TO THROW SOME OVER?

THAT WOULD BE GREAT. WE HAVE A SURPLUS OF SLIGHTLY ROTTEN EGGS HERE - SHALL WE CHUCK SOME ACROSS?

WE WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE THAT - THANK YOU



motivation to fail. When I lay this at the foot of cross of the family in rural Iowa who came from war-torn Viet Nam and have endured for decades both the insults and love of their neighbors, I gain motivation to fail. When I lay this at the foot of the cross of those who are sick and have to watch a loved one become sicker, or poorer, or deader because of a profit-driven health insurance system, I gain motivation to fail. We are tired of winter and I dare say that any of us who have a furnace must lay this at the foot of the cross of those who live in a tent and we gain motivation to fail. When I lay this at the foot of those in

Guantanamo, or Bagram where U.S. sanctioned torture denies the cross...it denies the relief that even state sanctioned death brings, it withholds resurrection (aka creation)—the unimaginable, I gain motivation to fail.

I am not a happy girl. The choice of Love quenches my tear-parched eyes;. More tangibly though, it is Simon of Cyrene that makes tears of joy flow. Pray for me my sisters and brothers; please pray please to be Simon for me that my tears do not dry. Although this lent does not make me one bit happy, pray that it does not cease from at least making me sad. I love you all.

Peter Maurin and the "Ecclesial Establishment"



by Brian Terrell

It is often said about Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin that their radical critique of capitalism, of the state, of "bourgeois society" did not extend to the Church that they both loved and from whose traditions they drew so deeply upon. Many quotes and anecdotes from the lives of these two holy people can be employed to support the popular thesis (often offered as a contrast to many of today's Catholic Workers) that Peter and Dorothy were docile and obedient Catholics who encouraged others to be so. When put in historical context, however, and put in context with other equally evocative references from their lives and words, a more complex and nuanced picture of their faith and of their rela-

tionship to the human institution of the church cannot be avoided.

One example among many of an overly simplistic view is found in Lawrence Holben's *All the Way to Heaven*, 1997, pg 78. "Maurin firmly believed the Roman Catholic bishops to be 'the appointed leaders of mankind' and his enthusiasm for personalist freedom stopped abruptly at the door of the hierarchical, authoritarian Church which he accepted on faith as the divinely appointed agent of God's will in the world. Maurin was not out to call the laity to rebellion against the worldliness or accommodationist theologies of the institutional Church or its clergy." A casual reading of the record might support this misunderstanding.

Peter sometimes complained about his work being "edited" in the pages of *The Catholic Worker* and left the

paper in protest for a time after its first edition. Mel Piel (*Breaking Bread*, 1982, pg 62) says that Dorothy deliberately "suppressed" some of Peter's notions that she felt might harm the Catholic Worker. He cites in particular Maurin's "mild anticlericalism," and quotes a letter Dorothy wrote to a priest friend in 1934, "I do indeed keep out some of his stuff which attacks the bishops. I just don't think that it is politic. There are quite a number of priests who think Peter just quaint when he verbally attacks the clergy, but who would hold up their hands in horror if we printed the stuff."

I do not second-guess Dorothy's determination made in 1934 about what was "politic" at the time for a brand new movement trying to get started and accepted in the pre-Vatican II Church, but I do mourn the loss of the "stuff" that did not make her cut in Peter's published *Easy Essays*. I also suggest that

what was impolitic to say in 1934 might be crucial to proclaim now in our very different time. Dorothy herself later did not seem to worry if it was "politic" to challenge Cardinal Spellman as a strikebreaker, nor was she overly concerned what clergymen's hands might be held up in horror when she condemned the cardinal's support for the Vietnam War. "Our worst enemies are of our own household," she quoted Jesus, referring to Cardinal Spellman.

Dorothy said in her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, 1952, that she loved the Church "for Christ made visible" but not for itself "so often a scandal to me." She admonished: "One must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the Church." Meditating on these words over the years, it grows clearer to me that Dorothy was writing in the imperative. "One must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction

with the Church." She was not saying that dissatisfaction with the Church is understandable or permissible for some, not that one *might* be so dissatisfied, but that it is positively required of us. Dissatisfaction with a Church so often, in Dorothy's words, "lined up with property, with the wealthy, with the state, with capitalism, with all forms of reaction" is a discipline that those who truly love the Church as she did, for Christ made visible, *must* cultivate.

If in the pages of *The Catholic Worker* in 1934 Dorothy deemed it impolitic to publish Peters' "stuff which attacks the bishops," she did not as editor so censor an article by Jack Cook published in *The Catholic Worker* in November, 1968: "The most profound criticism of the ecclesial establishment is the very existence of the Catholic Worker—in word and acts, past and present."

Calling All Rebels

by Chris Hedges

There are no constraints left to halt America's slide into a totalitarian capitalism. Electoral politics are a sham. The media have been debased and defanged by corporate owners. The working class has been impoverished and is now being plunged into profound despair. The legal system has been corrupted to serve corporate interests. Popular institutions, from labor unions to political parties, have been destroyed or emasculated by corporate power. And any form of protest, no matter how tepid, is blocked by an internal security apparatus that is starting to rival that of the East German secret police. The mounting anger and hatred, coursing through the bloodstream of the body politic, make violence and counter-violence inevitable. Brace yourself. The American empire is over. And the descent is going to be horrifying.

Those singled out as internal enemies will include people of color, immigrants, gays, intellectuals, feminists, Jews, Muslims, union leaders and those defined as "liberals." They will be condemned as anti-American and blamed for our decline. The economic collapse, which remains mysterious and enigmatic to most Americans, will be pinned by demagogues and hatemongers on these hapless scapegoats. And the random acts of violence, which are already leaping up around the fringes of American society, will justify harsh measures of internal control that will snuff out the final vestiges of our democracy. The corporate forces that destroyed the country will use the information systems they control to mask their culpability. The old game of blaming the weak and the marginal, a staple of despotic regimes, will empower the dark undercurrents of sadism and violence within American society and deflect attention from the corporate vampires that have drained the blood of the country.

"We are going to be poorer," David Cay Johnston told me. Johnston was the tax reporter of The New York Times for 13 years and has written on how the corporate state rigged the system against us. He is the author of "Free Lunch: How the Wealthiest Americans Enrich Themselves at Government Expense and Stick You With

the Bill," a book about hidden subsidies, rigged markets and corporate socialism. "Health care is going to eat up more and more of our income. We are going to have less and less for other things. We are going to have some huge disasters sooner or later caused by our failure to invest. Dams and bridges will break. Buildings will collapse. There are water mains that are 25 to 50 feet wide. There will be huge infrastructure disasters. Our intellectual resources are in decline. We are failing to educate young people and instill in them rigor. We are going to continue to pour money into the military. I think it is possible, I do not say it is probable, that we will have a revolution, a civil war that will see the end of the United States of America."

"If we see the end of this country it will come from the right and our failure to provide people with the basic necessities of life," said Johnston. "Revolutions occur when young men see the present as worse than the unknown future. We are not there. But it will not take a lot to get there. The politicians running for office who are denigrating the government, who are saying there are traitors in Congress, who say we do not need the IRS, this when no government in the history of the world has existed without a tax enforcement agency, are sowing the seeds for the destruction of the country. A lot of the people on the right hate the United States of America. They would say they hate the people they are arrayed against. But the whole idea of the United States is that we criticize the government. We remake it to serve our inter-

ests. They do not want that kind of society. They reject, as Aristotle said, the idea that democracy is to rule and to be ruled in turns. They see a world where they are right and that is it. If we do not want to do it their way we should be vanquished. This is not the idea on which the United States was founded."

It is hard to see how this can be prevented. The engines of social reform are dead. Liberal apologists, who long ago should have abandoned the Democratic Party, continue to make pathetic appeals to a tone-deaf corporate state and Barack Obama

while the working and middle class are ruthlessly stripped of rights, income and jobs. Liberals self-righteously condemn imperial wars and the looting of the U.S. Treasury by Wall Street but not the Democrats who are responsible. And the longer the liberal class dithers and speaks in the bloodless language of policies and programs, the more hated and irrelevant it becomes. No one has discredited American liberalism more than liberals themselves. And I do not hold out any hope for their reform. We have entered an age in which, as William Butler Yeats wrote, "the best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity."

"If we end up with violence in the streets on a large scale, not random riots, but insurrection and things break down, there will be a coup d'état from the right," Johnston said. "We have already had an economic coup d'état. It will not take much to go further."

How do we resist? How, if this descent is inevitable, as I believe it is, do we fight back? Why should we resist at all? Why not give in to cynicism and despair? Why not carve out as comfortable a niche as possible within the embrace of the corporate state and spend our lives attempting to satiate our private needs? The power elite,

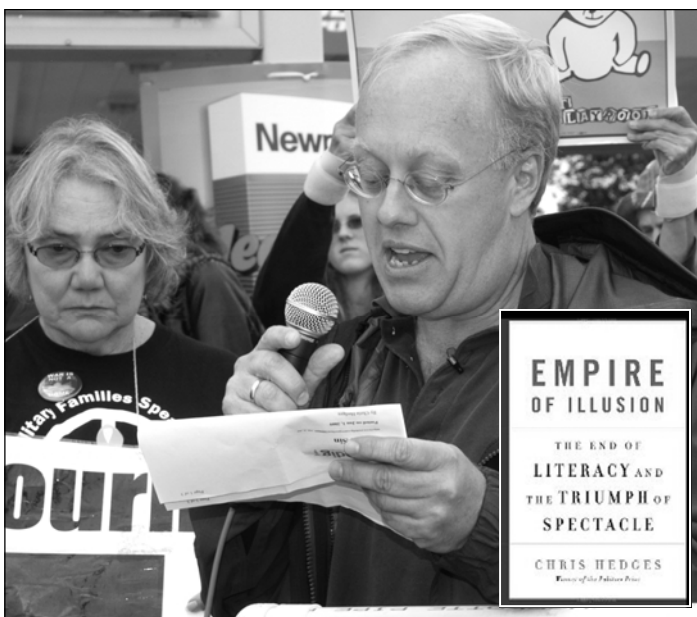
including most of those who graduate from our top universities and our liberal and intellectual classes, have sold out for personal comfort. Why not us?

The French moral philosopher Albert Camus argued that we are separated from each other. Our lives are meaningless. We cannot influence fate. We will all die and our individual being will be obliterated. And yet Camus wrote that "one of the only coherent philosophical positions is revolt. It is a constant confrontation between man and his obscurity. It is not aspiration, for it is devoid of hope. That revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it."

"A living man can be enslaved and reduced to the historic condition of an object," Camus warned. "But if he dies in refusing to be enslaved, he reaffirms the existence of another kind of human nature which refuses to be classified as an object."

The rebel, for Camus, stands with the oppressed—the unemployed workers being thrust into impoverishment and misery by the corporate state, the Palestinians in Gaza, the civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, the disappeared who are held in our

(Continued on page 10)



Chris Hedges, journalist and author of *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* speaks next to Gold Star mother, Celeste Zappala at a rally in 2009. Hedges will be a featured speaker at the Midwest Catholic Workers Resistance Retreat, April 23-26, 2010. See page 5. Photo by Cheryl Biren.

The Death and Life of Oscar Romero



by Gary G. Kohls, MD

March 24, 2010, was the 30th anniversary of the assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero, a pivotal moment in the modern history of Central America and a moment that deserves reflection among U.S. citizens regarding the role their own government played in the ghastly bloodshed that surrounded Romero's death.

Gunned down while saying Mass on March 24, 1980, Romero died because of his outspoken condemnation of militarism and injustice. He had emerged as the highest-profile defender of impoverished campesinos and idealistic members of the Catholic clergy who were demanding an end to centuries of inequality and repression in El Salvador.

Romero's murder also demonstrated how far Salvadoran rightists were prepared to go in stopping the growing movement for social and economic reform. The brazenness reflected, too, how confident the anti-communist security forces were in their eventual support from the U.S. government.

Yet, Romero was an unlikely martyr for justice. He had begun his rise to power in the Salvadoran Roman Catholic Church as a lowly, rather naïve and very conservative priest who was elevated to the episcopacy partly because he was thought to be an obedient servant for the wealthy Salvadoran elite.

Romero was expected to protect the elite's tradition of maintaining power and control, by any means necessary, over the exploited working classes, especially the rural peasants, most of whom were practicing Catholics who had been told for centuries to look to the after-life for their reward.

However, these *campesinos* had begun to show signs of revolt, finally demanding freedom from their centuries of oppression. They formed quasi-revolutionary groups deriving inspiration from Jesus' gospels praising the poor and rejecting greed.

Romero saw how the Salvadoran security forces were resorting to torture, extra-judicial killings and disappearances to silence and

intimidate the liberation movement, including young clergy assigned to Romero's archdiocese. Each night, mutilated bodies were being dumped along the streets.

In the face of this cruelty, Romero's politics and theology did an about-face. He began a courageous three-year ministry openly opposing the Salvadoran military, the wealthy elites and his compromised Catholic Church hierarchy, which had long sided with the rich and powerful.

His path to martyrdom was set, and he knew it.

Romero became a Christ-like figure, who followed Jesus' example of unflinching anticipation of martyrdom. Romero also adopted the methods of Jesus, a strategy of active nonviolent resistance. He repeatedly called on the security forces to stop the repression.

He pleaded directly to the soldiers, who would change into plains clothes before heading off onto their death-squad missions. He told them, in the name of God, to refuse orders to shoot their countrymen. In his last Sunday sermon, a broadcast he knew was being monitored by the Salvadoran military, he said:

"Before an order to kill that a man may give, the law of God must prevail that says: Thou shalt not kill! No

soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God."

Romero knew his days were numbered, but that knowledge didn't stop him from speaking out for human rights, on behalf of the poor and helpless. In one of his last interviews, Romero said:

"If God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may my death be for the freedom of my people ... A bishop will die, but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish. If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people."

Romero maintained his Christ-like, nonviolent stance to the end, even challenging the ethics of leftist rebels who felt that they had no recourse but to exact violent revenge against the fascists who controlled the security forces.

On March 24, 1980, after ending his final homily, Romero turned to the congregation to consecrate the Eucharist. And he said:

"May this Body immolated and this Blood sacrificed for Mankind nourish us also, that we may give our body and our blood over to suffering and pain, like Christ -- not for Self, but to give harvests of

peace and justice to our People."

Then, the assassin's bullet pierced his heart.

And like Jesus who urged forgiveness for the obedient Roman soldiers who were "only" following orders as they carried out his torture and execution, Romero's last words were: "May God have mercy on the assassins."

Romero's assassination was widely believed to be the work of former Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, who, like other Salvadoran death squad operatives had trained at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas and who reflected the intense anti-communism that had long pervaded U.S. national security policies.

After Romero's killing, the reign of terror grew worse. Opposition political leaders and unionists were hunted down and murdered.

The rightists also were emboldened by the election of Ronald Reagan in November 1980. The next month, Salvadoran security forces kidnapped, raped and murdered four American churchwomen, an act that some members of Reagan's inner circle found reasons to excuse.

Once in office, Reagan escalated U.S. military assistance and training for the Salvadoran security forces while going on the offensive against human rights activists

Romero was a Christ-like figure, who followed Jesus' example of unflinching anticipation of martyrdom.

who reported on the repression.

In December 1981, the first U.S.-trained Salvadoran army unit, the Atlacatl Battalion, conducted the systematic slaughter on the entire village of El Mozote in northeastern El Salvador. The victims included women, some of whom were raped first; their children; and unarmed men. The total of those killed was believed to have exceeded 800.

When reports of the massacre surfaced in the U.S. press in early 1982, Reagan officials denied that a massacre took place and set out to destroy the careers of journalists who reported such stories. (It would take nearly a decade before a United Nations forensic team was allowed access to El Mozote where it dug up the skeletons, including tiny ones of little children.)

The Reagan administration also escalated military support for right-wing regimes in Honduras and Guatemala, where other death squads and extermination campaigns kept control for right-wing elites. And Reagan's CIA organized support for a terrorist anti-communist force known as the *contras* which ravaged border areas of leftist-ruled Nicaragua.

Before the U.S.-backed counterinsurgency in El Salvador ended in 1992, some 75,000 people had died and D'Aubuisson's right-wing ARENA party had become the country's dominant political force. In

(Continued on page 10)



Photo by Alison McKellar

This entrance to a community building in El Salvador serves as a reminder and commemoration of the work and life of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Translations of the quote follow.

"The church cannot remain silent in the face of injustice without becoming an accessory to it." - Monseñor Romero, July 24, 1977

"We either offer our service to the lives of Salvadorans or we are complicit in their death." February 2, 1980

"I look not for my own personal gain but for the common good of my people." January 14, 1979

"A pastor must be where the suffering is." October 30, 1977

"From this moment on, I offer my blood for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador... May my blood be a seed of liberty." March, 1980

Calling All Rebels

(Continued from page 8)

global black sites, the poor in our inner cities and depressed rural communities, immigrants and those locked away in our prison system. And to stand with them does not mean to collaborate with parties, such as the Democrats, who can mouth the words of justice while carrying out acts of oppression. It means open and direct defiance.

The power structure and its liberal apologists dismiss the rebel as impractical and see the rebel's outsider stance as counterproductive. They condemn the rebel for expressing anger at injustice. The elites and their apologists call for calm and patience. They use the hypocritical language of spirituality, compromise, generosity and compassion to argue that the only alternative is to accept and work with the systems of power. The rebel, however, is beholden to a moral commitment that makes it impossible to stand with the power elite. The rebel refuses to be bought off with foundation grants, invitations to the White House, television appearances, book contracts, academic appointments or empty rhetoric. The rebel is not concerned with self-promotion or public opinion. The rebel knows that, as Augustine wrote, hope has two beautiful daughters, anger and courage—anger at the way things are and the courage to see that they do not remain the way they are. The rebel is aware that virtue is not rewarded. The act of rebellion defines itself.

"You do not become a 'dissident' just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career," Vaclav Havel said when he battled the communist regime

in Czechoslovakia. "You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society. ... The dissident does not operate in the realm of genuine power at all. He is not seeking power. He has no desire for office and does not gather votes. He does not attempt to charm the public. He offers nothing and promises nothing. He can offer, if anything, only his own skin—and he offers it solely because he has no other way of affirming the truth he stands for. His actions simply articulate his dignity as a citizen, regardless of the cost."

Those in power have disarmed the liberal class. They do not argue that the current system is just or good, because they cannot, but they have convinced liberals that there is no alternative. But we are not slaves. We have a choice. We can refuse to be either a victim or an executioner. We have the moral capacity to say no, to refuse to cooperate. Any boycott or demonstration, any occupation or sit-in, any strike, any act of obstruction or sabotage, any refusal to pay taxes, any fast, any popular movement and any act of civil disobedience ignites the soul of the rebel and exposes the dead hand of authority. "There is beauty and there are the humiliated," Camus wrote. "Whatever difficulties the enterprise may present, I should like never to be unfaithful either to the second or the first."

"There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you

can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop," Mario Savio said in 1964. "And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all."

The capacity to exercise moral autonomy, the capacity to refuse to cooperate, offers us the only route left to personal freedom and a life with meaning. Rebellion is its own justification. Those of us who come out of the religious left have no quarrel with Camus. Camus is right about the absurdity of existence, right about finding worth in the act of rebellion rather than some bizarre dream of an afterlife or Sunday School fantasy that God rewards the just and the good. "Oh my soul," the ancient Greek poet Pindar wrote, "do not aspire to immortal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible." We differ with Camus only in that we have faith that rebellion is not ultimately meaningless. Rebellion allows us to be free and independent human beings, but rebellion also chips away, however imperceptibly, at the edifice of the oppressor and sustains the dim flames of hope and love. And in moments of profound human despair these flames are never insignificant. They keep alive the capacity to be human. We must become, as Camus said, so absolutely free that "existence is an act of rebellion." Those who do not rebel in our age of totalitarian capitalism and who convince themselves that there is no alternative to collaboration are complicit in their own enslavement. They commit spiritual and moral suicide.

they drew from Romero's martyrdom.

After winning the presidency, FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes said, "I will govern like Monsignor Romero wanted the men of his time to govern, with courage, but with prophetic vision. Bishop Romero asked the rulers to listen to the cry of justice from the Salvadoran people."

An hour before his inauguration, Funes prayed at Romero's tomb, a reminder of the power of non-violent inspiration even in the face of the worst forms of brutality and injustice.

Dr. Kohls is a retired physician from Duluth, Minnesota, and a founding member of Every Church A Peace Church. He writes about issues of religion, militarism, peace, justice and mental health.

Living My Prayer

by Sr. Helen Prejean

watch what I do to see what I really believe.

Belief and faith are not just words. It's one thing for me to say I'm a Christian, but I have to embody what it means; I have to live it. So, writing this essay and knowing I'll share it in a public way becomes an occasion for me to look deeply at what I really believe by how I act.

"Love your neighbor as yourself," Jesus said, and as a beginner nun I tried earnestly to love my neighbor — the children I taught, their parents, my fellow teachers, my fellow nuns. But for a long time, the circle of my loving care was small and, for the most part, included only white, middle-class people like me. But one day I woke up to Jesus' deeper challenge to love the outcast, the criminal, the underdog. So I packed my stuff and moved into a noisy, violent housing project in an African-American neighborhood in New Orleans.

I saw the suffering and I let myself feel it: the sound of gunshots in the night, mothers calling out for their children. I saw the injustice and was compelled to do something about it. I changed from being a nun who only prayed for the suffering world to a nun with my sleeves rolled up, living my prayer. Working in that community in New Orleans soon led me to Louisiana's death row.

So, I keep watching what I do to see what I actually believe.

Jesus' biggest challenge to us is to love our enemies. On death row, I encountered the enemy — those considered so irredeemable by our society that even our Supreme Court has made it legal to kill them. For 20 years now, I've been visiting people on death row, and I have accompanied six human beings to their deaths. As each has been killed, I have told them to look at me. I want them to see a loving face when they die. I want my face to carry the love that tells them that they and every one of us are worth more than our most terrible acts.

But I knew being with the perpetrators wasn't enough. I also had to reach out to victims' families. I visited the families who wanted to see me, and I founded a victims support group in New Orleans. It was a big stretch for me, loving both perpetrators and victims' families, and most of the time I fail because so often a victim's families interpret my care for perpetrators as choosing sides — the wrong side. I understand that, but I don't stop reaching out.

I've learned from victims' families just how alone many of them feel. The murder of their loved one is so horrible, their pain so great, that most people stay away. But they need people to visit, to listen, to care. It doesn't take anyone special, just someone who cares.

Writing this essay reminds me, as an ordinary person, that it's important to take stock, to see where I am.

The only way I know what I really believe is by keeping watch over what I do.

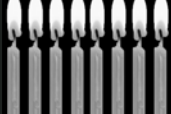


*This now famous essay by Sr. Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*, originally aired on NPR's *This I Believe*. Photo by Scott Langley*

Celebrate!



May 1



77th

*Birthday of the
Catholic Worker
Movement*

The Death and Life of Oscar Romero

(Continued from page 9)

1993, a U.N. truth commission determined that D'Aubuisson had ordered Romero's assassination. (D'Aubuisson, however, had died a year earlier of throat cancer.)

A number of key U.S. officials who participated in the Central American butchery—the likes of Elliott Abrams, John Negroponte and Otto Reich—have remained active in American politics and some landed prominent jobs in George W. Bush's administration.

Last year (2009), the leftist FMLN, the political heirs of the revolutionary movement of 30 years ago, finally ousted ARENA from power. In their electoral victory, the leftists hailed the inspiration



"For see, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of pruning the vines has come,
and the song of the dove is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance.
Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one,
and come!

Song of Songs 2:11-13

Seeing Christ in Everyone, or What I've Learned from Norm
(Continued from page 1)

around us--to see Christ in him." But, when I walk into the storeroom and visit with Norm for a while, the weight actually seems to lighten. It is there that I can see a glimpse of something truly good and real. He really does have love. That is a gift to me.

It's not that Norm can't get bothered by the way people sometimes behave; he can. He found himself growing tired of guests not saying "please" and "thank-you" when asking for things from the storeroom. The funny thing is that the thing that bothered him the most, (he told me) is that he takes seeing Christ in others seriously, and he felt bad that he was having

trouble doing that. He didn't talk bad about a whole group of people. He decided to take a trip, shall we say vacation, with the full intention of changing his thinking while he was gone so he could see better. He wanted to make sure that everyone at the worker knew he was not leaving on a bad note. I would worry about him being gone, but he told me not to. If he has the faith, I had better also. He has been such a good teacher so far. I do hope he is back by time this goes to print though.

One last thing, I often think that I know a lot. I observe. I see. I make judgments. I self-indulge in in these things, and in truth, I do know some things. But, sometimes I forget how limited we all are. I do sometimes think I know more than I really do. Just before Norm left, he walked out of his

room and said to me, "This is yours."

It was a book, *Imagining the Universe*, about comparisons of size and time in the universe. For instance, if our sun's solar system, including all its planets and the earth, were made the size of a grain of sand, and the grain was placed on home plate in Candlestick Park in San Francisco. Our nearest star neighbor, one out of billions of stars in our galaxy alone; only one galaxy out of billions of galaxies would be a dot clear over in New Mexico. How big is that? How small am I? How much do I really think I know? How did Norm know that would admonish me? Is God speaking through Norm to quicken my perceptions? Maybe. Hope so.

The US Coup in Haiti
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inquire if I could visit. The positive reply and offer to pick me up at the airport was all I needed to decide to make the journey alone. On March 14, I traveled to Haiti where for several hours of four days I stood outside the US consulate and Embassy holding two signs written in English and Creole "STOP the US/Bush military coup in Haiti" and "US Military and CIA out of Haiti."

US Marines were guarding the roof of the consulate and just as I began the vigil, one marine called down to me, "I'd like to shoot you in the head and splatter your brains on the street!"

Later that day, I saw a group of marines sitting on the balcony of the Presidential palace, with their feet kicked up on the railing casually drinking something out of cans. Someone had convinced these soldiers that Haiti was theirs!

I visited the brave people who staff the Office of Haiti Progress: the newspaper reporting attacks against Lavalas supporters. I learned from missionaries that US Aid, which had not had any money to fund clinics before, called the day after the coup to say that they had plenty of

money for programs and were inviting applications. I listened nightly to the thunder of low flying US helicopters invisible in the night sky as they menaced the people of Port au Prince.

I returned to Washington and held a vigil near the White House for Aristide and Haiti. A diplomat's car turned the corner and stopped in the middle of H Street for its passengers to read my sign - "Stop the US coup in Haiti." A passenger in the front seat lowered his window and I called out. "Don't recognize the coup government in Haiti"

"We won't," came the response.

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"Venezuela," he answered.

"Oh my God. you're next!" The blueprint is in motion. I hope to God we can stop it next time.

Kathy also recommends reading "The Uses of Haiti" by Dr. Paul Farmer.

First printed in the March, 2004, issue of *The Little Way*, the newsletter for the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington, D.C.

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Barn Rule: You Break It; You Own It.
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Haiti is even used for sexual recreation just like the old time plantations. Check the news carefully and you will find numerous stories of abuse of minors by missionaries, soldiers and charity workers. Plus there are the frequent sexual vacations taken to Haiti by people from the US and elsewhere. What is owed for that? What value would you put on it if it was your sisters and brothers?

US based corporations have for years been teaming up with Haitian elite to run sweatshops teeming with tens of thousands of Haitians who earn less than \$2 a day.

The Haitian people have resisted the economic and military power of the US and others ever since their independence. Like all of us, Haitians made their own mistakes as well. But US power has forced Haitians to pay great prices -- deaths, debt and abuse.

It is time for the people of the US to join with Haitians and reverse the course of US-Haitian relations.

This is not charity. This is justice. This is reparations. The current crisis is an opportunity for people in the US to own up to our country's history of dominating Haiti and to make a truly just response.

(For more on the history of exploitation of Haiti by the US see: Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*; Peter Hallward, *Damning the Flood*; and Randall Robinson, *An Unbroken Agony*).

Bill Quigley is Legal Director for the Center for Constitutional Rights and a long-time Haiti human rights advocate. Quigley77@gmail.com

Donations are gratefully accepted on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays, 3-7 pm at our Hospitality House, 1310 7th Street, Des Moines.

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Cash donations are essential to pay taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance bills and to purchase supplies.

House Repairs

With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.

Major House Repair

Lazarus House will need its roof replaced this summer. Any help in labor or donations to help defray this expense will be very gratefully received.

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Viva! Poets

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

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